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PASS TO PAO AND MEDICAL UNIT

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TAGS: [APER](#) [KFLU](#) [KPAO](#) [OEXC](#) [SCUL](#) [XA](#) [XD](#) [XF](#) [ZK](#)

SUBJECT: 2009-H1N1 FLU DETECTED AMONG PARTICIPANTS IN
YOUTH EXCHANGE AND STUDY (YES) PROGRAM

REF: THIS SUPERSCEDES AND AMENDS 06/17/09 CLASSIFIED
CABLE UNDER TITLE "2009-H1N1 FLU DETECTED
AMONG PARTIPANTS IN YOUTH EXCHANGE AND
STUDY ("YES") PROGRAM"

¶1. Summary: A group of 335 participants in the Department,s Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program gathered in Washington the week of June 8 for meetings and site visits before returning home. A small number of the returning students have experienced flu-like symptoms and we understand from local public health officials that several have possibly tested positive for 2009-H1N1 Influenza (also referred to as Novel H1N1). ECA is coordinating with NEA, SCA, AF, PA and other bureaus to make proper notifications and underscore that the health and welfare of all parties is our highest priority. This message provides posts with background on the program, steps that have been taken thus far and talking points for outreach to host governments. End summary.

¶2. The YES Program was established in October 2002 and is administered by ECA to provide scholarships for high school students (15-17 years) from countries with significant Muslim populations to spend up to one academic year in the U.S. Students live with host families, attend high school, engage in activities to learn about American society and values, acquire leadership skills, and help educate Americans about their countries and cultures. From 2003 to date a total of 3,480 students have participated in the YES program. Basic information can also be obtained at www.exchanges.state.gov/programs/youth.

¶3. During the week of June 8, 335 students from 18 countries (Bahrain, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Iraq, Israel (Arab Communities), Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mali, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Palestinian Territories (West Bank and Gaza), Qatar, Senegal, Suriname, Tunisia, and Yemen) were housed at Trinity College in Washington, DC, and participated in reentry workshops, visits to the Supreme Court, the White House, National Archives, the Newseum and other points of interest. They met with Under Secretary of State Judith McHale and attended a reception in the Russell Senate Office Building.

¶4. On Monday, June 15, Bahrain PAO called NEA/PPD to report that, according to the Ministry of Health, seven (7) returning Bahraini YES students tested positive for

2009-H1N1. Since that time, local authorities have reported cases of 2009-H1N1 among students from Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, the Palestinian Territories, Qatar, and Yemen, all of whom participated in a U.S. exchange program. There are also instances in other countries where symptoms have been reported, but no confirmed cases.

15. ECA, in consultation with other bureaus, has informed domestic organizations, embassies and host families and individuals. Please note that exposure may have come from anywhere in the country, or even while in transit back to home countries, not necessarily from Washington. YES students live throughout the United States and the entire country is affected by the pandemic.

16. Posts are authorized to reach out to host governments and offer reassurance that the U.S. Government takes the outbreak of 2009-H1N1 in returning YES students very seriously and is doing all it can to address the situation quickly. Posts should draw upon the following talking points when discussing the outbreak with host governments.

Talking points follow:

The United States Government is taking seriously the outbreak of 2009-H1N1 influenza among returning students from a U.S government funded exchange program, the Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program, in the United States.

The health, safety and welfare of all participants remain our top priority for the YES program. We recognize our responsibility to inform those who have been potentially affected. That is why once the matter came to our attention (on June 14) we acted quickly to contact students and their families. The U.S Government is grateful for the level of support and cooperation provided by your government.

Cases of 2009-H1N1 have been reported among returning students from Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, the Palestinian Territories, Qatar, and Yemen. We are working closely with governments of the respective countries to ensure all students are aware of the situation and receive the necessary medical advice, as recommended by their home country Ministries of Health.

It remains unclear how and where students may have been exposed to the 2009-H1N1 virus. In light of World Health Organization (WHO) upgrading of 2009-H1N1 to a global pandemic we may never know how or where the students contracted the virus.

The State Department has implemented its Pandemic Action Alert Plan and is continuing to monitor developments. USG health officials stand ready to provide any assistance that may be required.

We hope we can stay in close contact with your government until the situation is resolved.

17. Additional information may be obtained from the following sites:

--WHO (<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>)
--US CDC (<http://www.cdc.gov/>)

18. Updated press guidance will be provided separately when available.

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